SERVITUDE,

AND THE

DUTY OF MASTERS TO THEIR SERVANTS.

A SERMON,

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NOTE.

THERE are two points to which the attention of the reader is solicited, previously to the perusal of the following discourse. The first is, that among the Israelites there were two species of slavery, the one *domestic* and the other *foreign*. The former enslaved for a time, and in one case permanently, the *free-born* Israelites. The latter held in *absolute* and *perpetual* bondage, slaves purchased or captured from *heathen* and *foreign* nations.

The other point is, that there is a wide difference between the *lawfulness* and the *expediency* of slavery. The latter question must always be kept open for debate, and men either South or North may be heard upon it. But the denial of *all right* to hold slaves, and thus involving every slave-holder in positive and abiding criminality, is a very different matter.—This question, the South at least, holds to be *settled*, not only by the American Constitution, but by the Providence and Word of God. Nor can we conceive, how the most anti-slavery man can consistently deny it. For even the right to *emancipate* and *free* implies the *previous* right to *possess* and *own*.

COLOSSIANS IV. I.

"Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in Heaven."

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The peculiar view which has been recently taken of the relation between master and servant, has well nigh excluded from the pulpit two important classes of relative duties—the duties of masters to their servants, and the corresponding duties of servants to their masters. The *validity* of this relation has itself been assailed—the consequence of which is, that the *obligations* growing out of it have assumed a *doubtful character*. The object of the present discourse is, first, to exhibit the *just and scriptural authority* for the relation between master and servant, and secondly, to enforce upon masters, those duties which the word of God enjoins.

A distinguished speaker recently said in the course of a debate, that "he was for meeting the question on Bible ground, and declaring *slavery a sin*, and at war with the fundamental principles of the government of God."* Another said, in apporition to a certain report, that "while the Church admits slaveholders to her communion she approves of slavery."† And others again went even farther, and were said to have declared that "if they thought the Bible tolerated slavery, they would reject the Bible!"‡

While hearing such sentiments as these, one cannot help being amazed at the wonderful change which has taken place in public *opinion* on this subject, within less than three fourths of a century past. At that time, not only slavery, but the *African slave trade* was advocated upon grounds of *humanity!*— It was maintained, that the condition of the Africans was already one of the most *abject* slavery. That when taken in war, such were their barbarous practices, that either *butchery* or *sale* was the inevitable consequence. That to prevent such butchery, it was proper and right that Europeans should purchase them. That it was far better for Christian nations to hold them in slavery, than for them to be enslaved by other nations more cruel and oppressive. And therefore it was concluded "that the *slave trade* does not on the whole violate humanity, because it does not on the whole diminish that happiness which humanity seeks to promote."*

At that period, too, Divines were bold to assert, that the relation between master and servant was one fully recognized

*Dr. Edward Beecher. See N. Y. Observer, May 27, 1843.
†Rev. Mr. Kelogg. Do do do do
‡Dr. Wisner's Speech. Do do do do
*Bissett's England. Vol. II. 109.

both by the law of nature, and by the Bible.† Even the pious John Newton was, for a considerable time after his conversion, a regular dealer in this sort of traffic!

Now, matters have tended to the other extreme; and the modern christian master, who but receives and holds from his ancestors a legacy which has thus come down to him, is regarded as a monster and an infidel! Such things shock our feelings; and we are entirely at a loss to imagine, how the same christian nations which once engaged in the *African slave trade* as a matter not simply of profit, but of *humanity*—how these same nations can now denounce *slavery* as a sin, and the slave-holder, as unworthy the sacraments and institutions of christianity!

But what has produced this extraordinary change in so short a time? To this we reply, *extravagant and erroneous views of national and personal liberty.* The American Revolution had severed the chains which bound the American colonies to England. A new and remarkable government had sprung up in this country. One of the fundamental principles assumed by this new government was, "that all men are created equal: that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights—that among these are life, *liberty*, and the pursuit of happiness."* The noble triumph of the American people—the freedom and equality of their citizens—and the unqualified announcement of the sentiment above alluded to, were all calculated to make not only a deep, but a *false impression* upon mankind, as to the nature and *worth* of freedom. France revolutionized—England abolished the slave-trade†—and several of the American States abolished slavery. These free sentiments are still spreading; and inasmuch as missionaries and others are pervading the world with the gospel, and are thus preparing men for liberty and its blessings, mankind seem to be hastening on to a period of civilization and happiness, unequalled in the history of our race.

This revolution, however, in public opinion, as might have been expected, has been associated with *many errors and much rashness.* Not only have the *oppressions* of monarchy been denounced, but *monarchy itself.* Not only have the *evils* of government been resisted, but government itself in some cases decried as *an evil*! The *parental* relation too has by some been assailed; the relation between husband and wife spoken against; and in short every relation but that of *equality*, and every duty incompatible with *perfect personal liberty* have been *denied!*

No wonder then that the relation between master and servant should have been assailed; and that those great and patriotic men, such as Washington, Jefferson and others, who under God,

†Brown's Body of Divinity. P. 23.
*See Declaration.
†Introduced into Parliament 1788—passed 1806.

have given more liberty to the world, than the world ever possessed before, that *such men* should be ranked among the foulest oppressors and the greatest monsters of mankind! No wonder that southern christians, and southern philanthropists should be denounced, and considered as unworthy a seat at Christ's table, with their more honored and exalted brethren.

But what is *the truth* on this subject? It is often *this*, we are now about to enquire, "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a master in heaven." It must be evident to all, that the *relation* of master and servant is here recognized, "*Masters give unto your servants, &c.*" Things are here called by their proper names. The higher relation is that of "*master*," of *proprietor* and *ruler*: the lower one that of "*servants*," of persons "under the yoke," and subject to the authority of their owners. Still, this relation has its *rights*; and if the servant is *bound* to obey his master, the master is also bound to render to his servant, "that which is just and equal."

Slavery refers to the right which one man has to the service of another. When a man is free, he has the right to employ his *service* for himself; when he is enslaved, he renders *that service* to another, which would otherwise have been his own. It is not so much therefore *himself* that is enslaved, as it is his *labor.*

Every notion of servitude which surpasses this is both erroneous and pernicious. What right has the master to the *life* of his servant? None at all. Such *life* is the peculiar property of Him who gave it. It belongs neither to master nor to servant, and therefore is not a matter which is put into another's hand, when a man is enslaved. Nor has the master a right to his servant's *property*. If, by economy, by industry, or otherwise, the servant becomes even *richer* than his master, his property is still his own. Much less may the master *enslave* the *conscience* of his servant; he may instruct and teach him, and is bound to do so; but to force him to adopt his own creed, is an act of the greatest tyranny and oppression. Slavery, I repeat it, is limited to the *service only* of the party enslaved.

There is a limitation also even to *this service.* It must be such both in *extent* and *kind*, as the person, if free, might be supposed to employ for himself. And, if there be an error here, it is best to err on the safe side, and to require *less*, instead of more service than the enslaved might put forth in his own behalf were he free. It is certainly a *reasonable service*, and none other, that one who falls under the laws of slavery binds himself, or is bound by others, to render. All beyond this is tyrranny and oppression.

Nor is this all. There must be so much of care taken of the enslaved, and so much of kindness and comfort extended to

him as comports with this relation, and as we may suppose, would be put into the contract, when one voluntarily enslaves himself to another for life. This is precisely what the Apostle means, by rendering to servants "that which is just and equal."

The right of the master then extends but to the *reasonable service* of him whom he holds in slavery, and by a necessary consequence, the *obligation* of the servant ceases at the same point. It is true the master holds in his possession *the person* of his slave— but the reason of this is, that *his services* could not otherwise be rendered. The claim of the master however, is to the *service* of the slave, and he only holds *his person* as the means of obtaining that service.

I make these remarks for two reasons—first, because there are many, who have a most horrible idea of slavery in itself. They speak of it as traffic in human blood; as property in human flesh, &c. These ideas, however, are all imaginative; when we remember that slavery refers to *service* not to flesh—to *labor*, not to *human nature.*

There are others, again, who possess slaves, who seem to think that they have every sort of right to their servants; who imagine, that whatever use they apply them to, or whatever punishment they inflict upon them, still, all is *sanctioned* by justice and right. This is by no means true. The master's right, like that of a parent, like that of a magistrate, like that of men in every other relation of life, *is limited.* It is not unbounded, it is restrained; and every violation of this principle is a sin against nature, against God, and against society.

The question next comes up---*are there any righteous grounds upon which a man may be under obligation to serve another for life?* or, in other words, *can slavery have a foundation in natural justice?*

No one can doubt, but that a man *born free*, has a natural right to the use and employment of his own limbs and bodily members. Now, if he have such right, he certainly is at liberty to employ these limbs and members either directly for himself, in the acquisition of property; or, if he choose, he may surrender *their use* to another, upon such terms as as he may think proper. A man has just as much right to invest *service* as *capital*; and he may invest either for a *longer* or *shorter* period, according to his pleasure.

When Jacob bound himself to Laban *fourteen years* for Leah and Rachel, he did only that which he had a perfect *right* to do; and if he had chosen to have bound himself *for life*, upon terms agreeable to his wishes, he had a *right* to do so: and as he himself was *bound* after such arrangements with Laban, so the latter would have the *right* to *require* his services.

How often is it among us, that guardians and others *obligate* the services of those committed to their care, to other men for

a term of years! In fact, we see this principle illustrated whenever one man *hires himself* to another for a given period.

These facts show, that a man may part with his *personal freedom*, or, in *other words*, may *enslave himself*, if he choose to do so; and if the terms upon which he is thus held in slavery be just and equitable, his bondage is not only free from censure, but may be considered even as *obligatory*, so that *justice* would require not his *release*, but his *possession*.

We proceed one step farther. The second, or *owning* party having now the *right* to the *service* of the other, may of course *barter* that right, provided nothing exist in the first contract to forbid it; and provided, also, that nothing is done against *the spirit* of that contract! If the first contract limit the service to the first proprietor, or if an exchange of masters could not be made but with the infringement of the *design* of that contract, of course no right of sale would be admissible. If, however, there were no such restrictions, but an indefinite liberty granted to the *proprietor*, then of course, he would have the *same right* to dispose of the *service* he had contracted for, that the *original proprietor* had to part with it himself.

Besides the transfer of services to another in the methods above alluded to, there are *four other ways* in which men may be enslaved---by *debt*, by *crime*, by *captivity in war*, and by *being born such*.*

We have already intimated that service is *natural capital*---or, in other words, that it is *the equivalent* for money. If, then, the *debtor* be unable to pay his debts, if he have no *money*, but have an *available service*, certainly, either through an arrangement made with his creditors by himself, or, by a provision in the civil law, his *services* for life, or for a *given time*, may be transferred to another.

The Hebrew Law recognized both of these principles. The insolvent debtor, though a free-born Israelite, could be sold by the Judges as a slave. This slavery, however, except when voluntarily continued, could last only *six years*. (Ex. xxi. 1--4.) The insolvent debtor might also sell *himself*, either to an Israelite, or to a foreigner. This species of servitude with the Israelites, though not *with the enslaved heathen*, terminated at the Jubilee. (Lev. xxv. 40.) Hence, our Saviour in one of his parables represents a Royal creditor, as commanding one of his debtors to be sold, and his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. (Matt. xviii. 25.)

Another method in which one's personal liberty may be forfeited, is, *by crime*. A man may be said to have a natural right to the free use of his limbs and person. If, however, in the exercise of such right, he trample upon the *rights* of others,

*The father among the Israelites might also enslave his children. (Ex. xxi. 7.)

or, upon the laws of the land, the welfare of society requires, that his liberty be either restrained, or *entirely taken away*. He thus *forfeits* to the State, or *surrenders* to another, that *natural right to freedom* in which he was born. Cases of this kind occur in all ages and in all countries. Our Penetentiary systems are examples of this sort. Here the criminal is confined, and compelled to labor, not for himself, but for the country whose laws he has violated. In some cases too, when capital offences have been committed, the punishment of *death* has been commuted into *slavery for life*. Thus, Joshua being deceived by the Gideonites, doomed both them and their children after them, to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water" forever. (Josh. ix.)

Another, and a still more fruitful source of slavery is *captivity in war*. When two nations go forth to war, the life of one nation is virtually staked against the life of the other. Victory decides which is to live. That victory falling on the one side or the other, the *conquered people* fall with it into the hands of their conquerors. It is upon this principle, rigidly carried out, that wars have generally been conducted in all barbarous and semi-civilized nations. Hence the most *dreadful slaughter* has often succeeded such conquests.

The laws of the Israelites fully recognized the *justice* of this principle. "When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it (says Moses) then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee; then, it shall be, that all the people that is found therein, shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it. And when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thy hands, thou shalt smite *every male thereof with the edge of the sword.* But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, thou shalt take unto thyself." "Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities which are veay far off from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations." But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth." (Dieut. xx. 10.—16.)

Here, the Israelites are expressly commanded, to destroy utterly the *entire race* of the Canaanites; and when they should wage war with other and remote nations, to kill all *the men*, and to *enslave* all the women and children. This policy was fully carried out by them in their after history, as the Scriptures abundantly teach. And consequently, the number of slaves in the land of Israel, especially in the days of Solomon, was immensely great.

But slavery may also arise from *one's birth*. By a *general*, and on the whole, a *very good law* of human society, the child

takes the *social condition* of the parent. The children of the free, according to this law are free, and the children of the enslaved are themselves slaves.

This principle is fully recognized by the word of God. In his covenant with Abraham, the Lord placed precisely upon the same footing—"him that was *born* in the house and him that was *bought* with money;" that is, the slave *by purchase* and the *slave by birth*. (Gen. xvii. 13.) And so absolute was this law, that even where the father was a freed man, but the mother a slave, the children remained in the condition of the mother, and were considered as slaves. Speaking of the Israelites enslaved six years for debt, Moses says, "If his master have given him a wife, and she have borne him sons or daughters, the *wife* and *her children* shall be her *master's*, and he (the father) shall go out by himself." (Ex. xxi. 4.)

There are then at least six general *grounds* or *conditions*, upon which men, according to both the law of nature and the scriptures, may be held as slaves. They may *sell their freedom to others*, or, *they may forfeit it by debt*, or, *sacrifice it by crime*, or, *loose it in war;* they may be *purchased as slaves*, or *may inherit slavery by birth.** Wherever slavery has existed upon any *just* or *righteous* grounds, such grounds are to be found in one or another of these considerations.

Three of these causes are concerned in the production of *American slavery*. The first of these causes was war. In their feuds among themselves, native Africans became *enslaved*.—Their liberty was forfeited in the hazards of war, according to their own laws, and the custom of ages. They were not enslaved by foreigners, but by their *own people*. The second cause was *purchase*. Those who held the *liberty* of the captives in their hands, for pecuniary considerations, sold that liberty to others. These last brought those they purchased to America, where, by *birth*, the third cause alluded to, slavery has continued to the present time.

Apart from all *particular questions* which may arise, these *general grounds* of American slavery may be considered as *just and righteous;* as *sanctioned by* the word of God and the custom of ages. These principles may have been transcended in some cases—the rule of *justice* may not have been always observed, still, however, these are the *ostensible* and the *more general bases* upon which slavery exists among us.

Nor is it necessary here to know that the ancestor of any particular slave was *justly* taken in war; that he was *justly* bought and paid for by the original purchaser; or, that in the whole line of ancestors to the slave himself, all has been just and equitable. Upon this principle we could establish *rights* and *privileges* in no case whatever. We could not establish our claim

*Among the Israelites a father might also enslave his children. Ex. xxi. 7.

to our estates in this way. We could not establish the validity of our church privileges in this way. We could establish *nothing* in this way.

The only questions to be decided here are—whether there are any *just* and *equitable* grounds of *slavery*? whether these grounds appear to have existed in the enslaving of the Africans? and whether we, according to the laws of our country, have a legal right to those we hold in bondage? These questions being decided in the affirmative, and we are clothed by the laws of Africa, by the custom and laws of ages, by the constitution of our own country, and by the Word of God, with all the responsibilities of *masters*. A *valid relation* exists between ourselves and those we hold in bondage. Ties have been formed, privileges secured, responsibilities incurred, and a solemn and conscientious regard must be given to the compact. "*That servant rebels against God who overlooks this tie—that master sins against his Maker, who tramples its duties under foot.*" And what, what I ask, are we to think of those, who are seeking to subvert this tie and to annihilate all the duties connected with it? Is he innocent who seeks to weaken the matrimonial bond, and to alienate husband and wife from each other? Is he innocent who is attempting to subvert the relation of parent and child, and thus to uproot all family duties and family sympathies? Is he innocent, who sets the citizen against the magistrate, and the magistrate against the citizen? Can men be considered as guiltless, no matter what their object, who in any way are seeking to rend the ties and relations of society, and thus to destroy its responsibilities, its privileges, and its very being? No. And the only charitable construction to be put upon such conduct is, that it is the result of ignorance and inconsideration. The relation between *master* and *servant* among us is a *reality*, a *weighty reality*. It is a reality too which concerns our own peace, the peace of our families and servants, and the peace of society at large. The *relation exists*, and whether men will hear it or no, still the word of God will proclaim it, "Masters give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a master in Heaven."

Having exhibited the natural grounds for the existence of slavery, I now proceed to present the *scriptural authority* upon which it is based.

This relation is distinctly recognized, I remark first, in *the covenant made with Abraham.* "He that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, must needs be circumcised." Gen. xvii. Here, the relation is not only recognized, but *confirmed* and *sanctioned* by the rite of circumcision.

This relation is also *twice* recognized in the *moral law.* In it (that is on the Sabbath,) thou shalt not do any work, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor *thy man servant,* nor *thy*

maid servant." Again, in the tenth commandment it is said, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor *his man servant*, nor *his maid servant*, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's." Ex. xx. Here the man servant and the *maid servant* are considered as the *property* of the master, and under his authority, by the sanction of God himself.

Again, in the Levitical Law an express provision is made for the obtaining and holding of slaves. "Both thy bond men, and thy bond-maids which thou shalt have, shall be of the *heathen* which are round about you; of them shall ye *buy* bond-men and bond-maids. Moreover, of the children of the *strangers* that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye *buy*, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land, and they shall be your *possession;* and ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession: they shall be your *bond-men for ever.*"* Lev. xxv. 44—46.

That slavery then in even the fullest sense is sanctioned in the Old Testament, there can be no dispute whatever. The only question to be decided here is, Whether the *New Testament abolished this system as a peculiarity of the Israelites?* To this we give the following replies:

1. That if the New Testament abolished these principles, *such abolishing statute* should be pointed out. This, however, cannot be done, consequently, we must consider these principles as *recognized* by the New Testament as well as by the Old.

2. Another reply we make is, that since slavery is recognized in the *Moral Law*, which *cannot* be abolished, it must also be sanctioned under the New Dispensation. Christ came not "to destroy the law but to fulfil it." Faith does not make it void, but "establishes it." If, then, the master's right to his *man servant* and to his *maid servant* be recognized in the decalogue under the former dispensation, the same right must be recognized also under the latter. And to allege that the holding of slaves *is sin*, is but to affirm that the Moral Law sanctions iniquity!

3. My third reply is, that both Christ and his Apostles acted upon the ground that slavery was *lawful*. When asked by the Centurion to heal his *servant*, our Lord does not even *intimate* that the Centurion had no *right* to that servant. And the Apostles not only addressed servants as in bondage, and masters as holding authority over them, but insisted, as in the text, upon the *duties* growing out of these relations. And the Apostle Paul especially, after urging the duties of servants to

*Even the High Priest might be a slave-holder. Lev. xxii. 11. Also John, xviii. 26.

their masters, declares, that, "If any man teach otherwise and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doating about questions and strifes." (1 Tim. vi. 3.)

The New Testament, then, left the subject of slavery just where it found it. The only influence it exerted upon it was that of imparting to it its *own spirit and character*. It taught masters *justice*, and *kindness* towards their servants; and it taught servants *obedience* and *fidelity* towards their masters.

Slavery, then, as involving a condition in society and a definite relation between man and man, may be considered as having its foundation among those laws and principles which are sanctioned both by God and human Society. Every *master* therefore, may regard himself as holding a relation, to *which, in the providence of God he has been appointed*, and for the faithful discharge of whose duties he is solemnly accountable.

Whether that condition of society is *better* in which service is simply *hired*, or that in which it is *claimed as a right*, may be a question of serious dispute. Were all masters, masters indeed, were the principles of the gospel to govern every household and every plantation—in other words, were the slavery system carried out in a *scriptural sense*, I can scarcely imagine a better state of society than what might thus exist.

When, however, it shall be found that the *evils* of this system overbalance its advantages, when it shall appear, that the master and servant would each be advantaged by the dissolution of the tie that has long existed between them; then, of course, that policy would be wise, which shall provide for the gradual and ultimate emancipation of those held in bondage.

While, too, this system exists among us, no laws should be passed, which must necessarily interfere with that humane and christian treatment to which every good man must feel himself bound. All laws which interfere with the proper *instruction* of servants, which deny them privileges they might enjoy, and even those laws which in some of the States *constrain* servitude, and not only discourage, but *forbid* masters to liberate them,* *all such legislation* should be avoided. Even under the more galling *Roman* slavery such enactments were never made, and they would never have been introduced, I am certain, in the South, were it not for that *controversy* which has long existed among us as a nation, in reference to that part of our constitution which recognizes and sanctions the existence of slavery under our national confederation. We should not, however, inflict an injury upon the *innocent* in attempting to *punish the guilty.*

Having dwelt so long upon *the relation* between master and

*Slaves may be liberated and sent *abroad* in any of the States.

servant, I can specify in conclusion, but a *few* of the *duties* which this relation originates. "Masters give unto your servants that which is *just* and *equal*."

1. It is the duty of masters, I remark first, to *avoid all cruelty and unkindness* in the *treatment* of their servants.—The *abuse* of power in every relation of life is *tyranny*. A cruel parent, a cruel husband, a cruel magistrate, and a cruel *master*, are all to be considered as greatly guilty before God. One special exhortation given to masters, is, that they should "*forbear threatening*." Every thing unkind, severe, and harsh in the treatment of our servants, should be carefully avoided. Kindness here will do more than severity, and a little love than much wrath.

2. Masters should also attend to *the temporal comforts and wants of their servants*. This is that to which our text particularly alludes, "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal." Every proper idea of slavery implies that the temporal and bodily necessities of the slave be provided for. To exclude this, is *inhuman* and *cruel*. For the most part too, the servant is dependent upon his master for such supplies. If the master refuse them, he cannot *justly* obtain them. When then we consider the absolutely dependent situation of our servants upon us, this should induce us not to neglect their *temporal necessities and comforts*.

3. But we should also *instruct our servants in the principles and doctrines of the Word of God*. How are they to learn their duties to their masters, but from that word? How are they to appreciate fully the *justice* of their present condition, but from that word? And how are they to learn the way of salvation, but from the same source?

Among the Israelites, servants owned as property, were included among the covenanted people of God—were considered as children in the *second* degree, and were subject to the same moral discipline as the rest of the family. An invariable distinction was kept up between a *hired* servant, and one "bought with money," or "born in the house." The latter was to be trained and disciplined according to the laws and institutions of the Israelites. He was to be circumcised, to keep the Sabbath, and to observe the feasts of the Lord.

While then we argue much of our moral right to own slaves from the Institutions of Moses, it certainly is just, that we comply in this respect with those Institutions. Slavery among the Jews was made the means of conveying religious instruction, and of inculcating religious duty. It was itself, an institution of religion, and it was located among its strongest and happiest influences, in the family of the ancient patriarch.

It cannot fail to delight the heart of every christian and philanthropist, that *so much* has been done in the South for the

religious instruction of the colored people. In almost every place, they either worship with the whites in the galleries, or in seats appropriated for them; or, they have churches of their own. Several of these churches are larger and far better attended than even with the whites. In many cases *hundreds*, and in a few, more than a *thousand communicants* are known to belong to even *one* of these churches. In many places too, white missionaries have been employed for their exclusive instruction, and in others, missionary associations have been formed for their special benefit. All this is well. But, if masters on their plantations, or in their families, would institute *catechetical classes* for the more thorough instruction of the young in the doctrines and facts of christianity; or, if churches would generally adopt this course, which will ordinarily be found both pleasant and practicable, the religious instruction of the colored people would be rendered much more thorough and effective.

As for myself, some of the happiest moments of my life have been spent in preaching the gospel to this class of persons. Their readiness to hear, their great docility of temper, and their almost universal inclination to be religious, render them among the fittest subjects of scriptural instruction and counsel. While too, in other sections of christendom, the missionary is to go *abroad* to find the objects of his missionary toil, God, in his providence, has permitted to be located among us, a large and increasing class of persons, who, in all respects, have claims upon us both for pastoral and missionary labor. We depreciate not the *foreign* field; it is one of vast importance; but here is a great *home work* which we must not, dare not neglect.

It may be, that God designs to accomplish some great and good part in the evangelization of *the world* by the christian slaves of America. Their forefathers were even more degraded than *heathen;* but, by being born in America, by being associated with christians and freemen, even the *slaves* of the South have risen far beyond the condition of the *freest* and *best* in their father-land. Their *bondage* is a mere *circumstance.* It may, or it may not fall off; but doubtlessly *vast good* is designed to be accomplished by it. But for this *bondage* they had never been here; but for this *bondage* they had never attained their *present elevation* as christians and as men. And if ever prepared for *liberty*, (a pearl which but few people are morally capable of holding,) it is this *bondage* which is to prepare them for it!

I say nothing here of the injustice of those African systems which engender slavery. I pass by the cupidity and love of gain which may have influenced the original purchasers of African slaves. In all these *policies* there may have been

much of wrong, much of evil. Nor do I here allude to any cruelties which wicked masters may at times inflict upon their servants. I pass these by, and affirm it as my deliberate opinion, that God *intends* the enslaving of the Africans among us for *great good*. His wise and powerful hand has been directing and controlling in this matter a great moral machinery, in the midst of which, it is true, many a feebler and worse hand has mingled. Still, however, will the *final* and *good result* be accomplished: and masters and servants, those who hold slaves, and those who condemn slaveholders—*all* will be constrained to admire those results of *civilization*, of *liberty*, and of *christianity*, which shall thus be wrought out for Africa, by an exiled and enslaved portion of her long humbled population.

Let us, Brethren of the South, do our *present* duty. That duty is so to instruct and discipline our servants, that they may be fitted for all to which God either calls or may yet call them. Let us discharge our duties to them, and also require them to discharge their duty to us. This is our present work. It is our *great* work. Others may sing the jubilees of freedom over our heads and may worship, if they will, a god whom they call *Liberty*, (which is often the least liberal and the most cruel of the gods)—they may brand us with dark and unchristian names, but, rely upon it, the faithful discharge of our duty as christian masters, will accomplish for Africans and Africa, an amount of *good* which no other body of freemen and christians, have ever been permitted to effect for that dark and sunken land.

Oh, I look upon the work before us, as one of great moral sublimity—as one of the deepest interest. God is making us not the *oppressors*, but the *benefactors* and *liberators* of Africa. Other men may talk, may write, may hold conventions, and may even abuse and excommunicate, but ours is the sober and onward work of protecting, defending, and promoting the *tremendous moral trust* which God in his providence has placed in our hands. It is a work not simply of self-interest or of local policy, to which we are called. This is often affirmed —but nothing can be more false. Multitudes there are at the South, who firmly believe, that our American condition would have been far better, had there never been an African among us. No, it is not a selfish and sordid interest that we are serving. Ours is the great task of bearing immense responsibilities, of carrying the burdens of others, and of providing for the moral and social wants of an exotic race, related to us immediately only in the way of servitude; and yet, fearfully uniting our doom with their own, in a common account to the judge of all. To the discharge of this great, this solemn work, are we called; and when done, the christian master may look forward with pleasing anticipation to the reward of, "Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."